

Report of April 10,2008, OC/CIC Meeting

The 6th meeting opened with Gary Wolfe taking the chair in place of Dave White who was out of the country. Tom Carrow led the group in prayer which was followed by the pledge to the American Flag.

Larry Franzman, Director of the Franklin Co. Area Plan Commission was the first speaker of the evening. Mr. Franzman was asked to address the strengths & weaknesses of our county planning and zoning. He began by stating that we all need to read & understand the Comprehensive Plan, and if there are points we do not like, to note them and bring them back to this group. As other speakers have also said, Mr. Franzman also emphasized that the CP is the guide for zoning.

Since he has been director, he has experienced confusion and overlapping of our zoning. He thinks there are too many pages in the proposed code and that there needs to be more definitive wording. For example, erosion issues should go to the County Ditch Board; that road issues go to the County Highway Dept. and that the Co. Highway Dept. is not in a good financial position to take over roads.

Subdivisions are when anyone cuts a piece of land off their parcel. Some people want 3 or more houses on one road. Road frontage plays a key role in subdivisions. In panhandle lots Mr. Franzman felt that 30 ft. is ample access for these lots which are created when a farmer has rough ground at the rear of his property & wants to sell that part, the panhandle lot is their answer. He also stated that “cluster” subdivisions are good tools for farmers in A1 areas to use which we do not have now. And that due to the present economy he foresees that more & more farmers will be needing to sell land in order to pay their taxes.

In relation to fines, he spoke of a case that has been pending since 1993 regarding junk cars. Should there be property tax on them ? The courts levy the fines. He tries to negotiate with violators and they do not go out counting pets nor looking at signage. The times these are an issue is when the State or an individual comes in to complain. Also in relation to issues of junk cars, the Environmental Protection Agency

and the Indiana Department of Environmental Management is called in to help but do not seem to do their jobs.

Mr. Franzman answered many different questions during his presentation, one of them being “Do you offer incentives to people to build in a certain area?” No was the answer. He felt that houses should be near towns, but they are not. He also indicated that Salt Creek Township could boom due to its proximity to Greensburg and the new Honda plant and that “spinoff” industries could be in the county’s future. Another reason for the CP, industries look at it prior to coming in to a county.

Another issue is that of confined feeding operations. Our code is insufficient, and we see that by looking at Union County where a mega-dairy is being built. As part of Southeastern Indiana our county is being looked at by German investors for other mega-dairies. Even though they must meet certain state requirements, should we have more strict requirements?

Without being able to see into the future, the comprehensive plan must be revised every 4-5 years. The theme of our comprehensive plan is to preserve the rural lifestyle, are we doing a good job here? A couple of years ago, other counties were looking at us as their model. We are very close with our plan. Greg Kunkel offered the comment that the CP protects the community and allows you to do planned development and that for you to enable your children to build on your land that the minor subdivision is the device that allows you to accomplish this.

The next presenter was introduced by Joe Gillespie, Mr. Bill Schirmer of Highland Township. Schirmer discussed the previous effort in 1996-97 to rezone 640 acres near Southgate for industry. Many people came to object and wanted some say in the matter. That is when a man from Dearborn County told Schirmer about a comprehensive plan and at that time our only CP was from 1964. He went on to discuss that the zoning we do must cooperate with the CP. The text must reflect the plan.

Schirmer mentioned the lawsuit in Bright , Indiana against the commissioners and that brought the question by Jim Suhre, “should we be comfortable with this plan by the HNTB in a court case?”

Brian Patterson asked Schirmer if he thought our plan is a good one. And he responded that it is but that our biggest problem is acreage issues. Schirmer also felt that we should use additional methods to gather more public input. For example, a questionnaire in the paper for citizens to fill out and return.

The question was asked, “ what happened in the time between 1998 when the CP was drawn up and 2001 when it was adopted?” The answer being that there was no money to do the CP and a year was lost in applying and getting a grant and that there was almost no one at the hearing for the adoption.

Art Robinson from Bath Township offered the statements that our plan should be long range and that in it we should guard against exploitation of our county, protect our water quality and our land for those who will follow us in the future generations. He also felt that it is a mistake not to allow easements for public transit not only for quality of life issues but for health issues.

Brian Patterson suggested that we ask the commissioners to empower us to delve into the CP. Commissioner Don VonderMeulen responded that to be legal we must work with the CP and that as we work on the ordinances we must understand them as they relate to the CP and bring any issues up to the Commissioners.

Ending the session were other questions such as what is in the Indiana Code , do we need a lawyer ?

The meeting ended at 9:08 PM, next meeting will be April 17 at 7PM. There will be a new speaker and questions will be addressed.